

STEINDACHNERI (TRIONYX) SIEBENROCK, 1906:  
PROPOSED VALIDATION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS  
(REPTILIA, TESTUDINES). Z.N.(S.) 2162

By Robert G. Webb (*Department of Biological Sciences,  
University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas 79968, U.S.A.*)

The wattle-necked softshell turtle (Family TRIONYCHIDAE) distributed in southern China, including the island of Hainan, and North Vietnam has been referred to, without exception, by the specific name *steindachneri*, the proper generic combination for which is *Trionyx steindachneri*. This well-known name is antedated by a previously unrecognized senior synonym. It would be most unfortunate to allow *Trionyx steindachneri* to be changed after its unchallenged use since the original description in 1906.

2. This previously unrecognized, senior subjective synonym that antedates *Trionyx steindachneri* Siebenrock (1906, *Zool. Anz.* vol. 30: 579) is *Aspidonectes californiana* Rivers (1889, *Proc. Calif. Acad. Sci.* (2) vol. 2: 233–236). *Aspidonectes californiana* is the only synonym of the monotypic *Trionyx steindachneri*. The one specimen that formed the basis of the original description of *A. californiana* was imported to California by the Chinese. No kind of indigenous trionychid turtle occurs at the type locality of *A. californiana* ("Sacramento River, near the city of Sacramento"), and a type-specimen is not known to exist. The name *A. californiana* had been incorrectly allocated to the synonymy of *Trionyx sinensis* and *T. spiniferus emoryi*, and its taxonomic status had not been authoritatively determined until Webb (1975, *Copeia*, vol. 4: 771) appraised the type-description and demonstrated that *A. californiana* is a synonym of *T. steindachneri*.

3. Since *Aspidonectes californiana* has remained unused as a senior synonym in the primary zoological literature for more than fifty years, the name qualifies for treatment under Articles 23a-b and 79b (*Bull. zool. Nom.* vol. 31: 79–81, 87–89). A list of ten works by five different authors using *T. steindachneri* as a valid name during the last 50 years is appended to this paper.

4. Since the name *Aspidonectes californiana* Rivers, 1889 (1) is based on an imported specimen that is no longer extant, (2) has never been recognized as a senior synonym of *Trionyx steindachneri*, and consequently has never been associated with that taxon, and (3) has never been used since its original description as the valid name for any taxon, it is in the interest of nomenclatural stability to act contrary to the Law of Priority and preserve the

junior synonym *Trionyx steindachneri* Siebenrock, 1906 that has been universally accepted since the date of its proposal.

5. With establishment of *Aspidonectes californiana* Rivers, 1889 as a senior subjective synonym of *Trionyx steindachneri* Siebenrock, 1906, the Commission is requested:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *californiana* Rivers, 1889, as published in the binomen *Aspidonectes californiana* for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;
- (2) to place the specific name *steindachneri* Siebenrock, 1906, as published in the binomen *Trionyx steindachneri*, on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology;
- (3) to place the specific name *californiana* Rivers, 1889, as published in the binomen *Aspidonectes californiana*, as suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology.

*References to the use of Trionyx steindachneri Siebenrock  
as a valid name between 1927 and 1977*

- BOURRET, R. 1939. Notes herpétologiques sur l'Indochine française. XVI. Tortues de la collection du laboratoire des sciences naturelles de l'Université. Description d'une espèce nouvelle. *Bull. Gén. Instr. Publ.* No. 6: 11
- 1941. *Les tortues de l'Indochine*. Hanoi: 210
- MERTENS, R. & WERMUTH, H. 1955. Die rezenten Schildkröten, Krokodile und Brückenechsen. *Zool. Jahrb.* vol. 83 (Syst.): 392
- PETZOLD, H.-G. 1963. Über einige Schildkröten aus Nord-Vietnam im Tierpark Berlin. *Senck. Biol.* vol. 44: 11–12
- POPE, C.H. 1935. *The reptiles of China*. Natural history of Central Asia, vol. X. New York (Amer. Mus. nat. Hist.)
- PRITCHARD, P.C.H. 1967. *Living turtles of the world*. Jersey City (T.F.H. Publ. Inc.): 215, 217
- SMITH, M.A. 1931. *The fauna of British India including Ceylon and Burma*. Reptilia and Amphibia, vol. 1, Loricata, Testudines. London (Taylor & Francis): 178–179
- WERMUTH, H. & MERTENS, R. 1961. *Schildkröte, Krokodile, Brückenechsen*. Jena (Gustav Fischer): 280
- & ——— 1977. Liste der rezenten Amphibien und Reptilien. Testudines, Crocodylia, Rhynchocephalia. *Das Tierreich* Berlin (Walter de Gruyter), Lfg 100: 113
- WEBB, R.G. 1975. Taxonomic status of *Aspidonectes californiana* Rivers, 1889 (Testudines, Trionychidae). *Copeia* (1975) No. 4: 771–773.